

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1           1.     An authenticating system for determining the authenticity  
2 of a product, said system comprising:

3                 an authenticating agency storing an authentication code;

4                 a product having an authentication tag, said tag having a product  
5 code; and

6                 means for communicating by a consumer purchasing said product  
7 to said authenticating agency;

8                 whereby the consumer communicates the product code to said  
9 authenticating agency, said authenticating agency determining if the  
10 product code matches the authentication code to indicate the authenticity  
11 of said product.

1           2.     The authenticating system of claim 1 wherein the  
2 authentication tag includes an identification number for the product  
3 associated with the authentication code;

4                 whereby the consumer communicates both the identification  
5 number and the product code to said authenticating agency, said  
6 authenticating agency using the identification number to match the  
7 product code with the authentication code for the product.

1           3.    The authenticating system of claim 1 wherein the  
2   authentication tag includes a removable strip concealing the product  
3   code;

4               whereby the consumer removes the removable strip to reveal the  
5   product code.

1           4.    The authenticating system of claim 1 wherein the  
2   authenticating agency includes a database having a plurality of  
3   authentication codes matched to a plurality of identification numbers, at  
4   least one identification number associated with the product.

1           5.    The authenticating system of claim 4 wherein each  
2   authentication code may only be utilized once for authenticating said  
3   product.

1           6.    The authenticating system of claim 1 wherein said  
2   authenticating agency provides a response indicator to the consumer to  
3   indicate if said product is authentic.

1           7.     A method of determining an authenticity of a product, said  
2 method comprising the steps of:  
3           programming an authenticating agency with a valid authenticating  
4 code;  
5           affixing an authentication tag to a product, the authentication tag  
6 having a product code;  
7           purchasing, by a consumer, the product;  
8           providing the product code to the authenticating agency;  
9           determining, by the authenticating agency, if the product code  
10 matches the authenticating code; and  
11           providing the consumer a result of a match of the product code  
12 with the authenticating code.

1           8.     The method of determining an authenticity of a product of  
2 claim 7 wherein the authentication tag includes an identification number  
3 used in associating the product with the authentication code.

1           9.     The method of determining an authenticity of a product of  
2     claim 8 wherein:  
3           the product code is hidden prior to purchase; and  
4           further comprising, before the step of providing the product code  
5     to the authenticating agency, the step of revealing the product code by  
6     the consumer.

1           10.    The method of determining an authenticity of a product of  
2     claim 9 wherein the product code is hidden by positioning a removable  
3     strip over the product code.

1           11. An authenticating system for determining the authenticity  
2 of a product, said system comprising:  
3           an authenticating agency storing an authentication code;  
4           a product having an authentication tag, said tag having a product  
5 code and an identification number for identifying the product; and  
6           means for communicating by a consumer purchasing said product  
7 to said authenticating agency;  
8           whereby the consumer communicates both the identification  
9 number and the product code to said authenticating agency, said  
10 authenticating agency using the identification number to identify the  
11 authentication code and determining if the product code matches the  
12 authentication code for the product, said authenticating agency providing  
13 a result of the match of the authentication code with the product code to  
14 the consumer.